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REMARKS

The Office Action mailed October 28, 2003 has been received and carefully considered. Upon entry of the preceding amendments, claims 1 and 3 will be pending. As of the Office Action, claims 1-3 stand rejected. Claims 1 and 3 stand rejected as assertedly anticipated under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) by U.S. Patent No. 6,146,566 to Beeck et al. (Beeck). Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected as assertedly anticipated under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) by U.S. Patent No. 3,229,330 to Ferrier et al. (Ferrier). Claim 2 stands rejected as assertedly unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Beeck. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections in the light of the amended claims.

I. Amendments to the Claims

Claims 1 and 3 have been amended. Claim 2 has been cancelled. Support for the amendment is found at least at page 8, lines 10-22 and Figure 2 of the specification as originally filed. No new matter is added by way of this amendment. Applicants respectfully submit that the claims as amended put the Application in condition for allowance and should therefore be entered by the Examiner.

II. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(e)

Claim 1 and claim 3, which depends from claim 1, stand rejected as anticipated by Beeck. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. Beeck teaches a process for spinning polyamides through a spinning nozzle casing using an exhaust device positioned under at least one round spinning nozzle plate. Vapor is injected tangentially into the upper portion of the nozzle casing and is conducted against a circular, horizontally positioned groove. The vapor is then suctioned off by the exhaust device through an annular passage. Beeck, col. 2, lines 6-23, Figure 1.

Beeck fails to teach or suggest the Applicant's claimed invention including an annular space disposed between the interior walls of the spin head and the spinneret pack body and a removably mounted steam distribution ring situated to deflect the flow of steam from the annular space toward the spinneret orifice array.

This amendment clearly differentiates Applicants' claimed invention from that taught by Beeck. Claim 1 as amended includes a removably mounted steam distribution ring previously presented in claim 2, a feature absent from Beeck. Second, Applicants' claimed invention is further differentiated from Beeck which requires the use of a circular, horizontally positioned groove to redirect air passed downward through the spinneret nozzle by two helical grooves.

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Beeck does not teach, disclose or suggest an annular space through which steam flows. Rather Beeck teaches that steam flows through helical grooves formed in the spinneret pack. Beeck, Figure 1, col. 2, lines 6-22. In the device taught by Beeck, the steam initially contacts the horizontal groove only where it exits the helical grooves. Conversely, the Applicants' invention allows steam to travel downwardly around the entire spin pack through the annular space. In this way, the steam hits the steam distribution ring at many radial points about the ring's circumference and the steam is then deflected inward toward the orifice array.

Thus, Beeck does not teach each and every element of Applicants' claimed invention, nor does Beeck teach, disclose or suggest Applicants' claimed invention. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit the rejection should be withdrawn.

III. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(b)

Claim 1 stands rejected as anticipated by Ferrier. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. As already noted by Applicants in the specification at pages 2-3, Applicants' claimed invention is an improvement over Ferrier. In Ferrier, wiping the face of the spinneret is extremely difficult and may even require replacing the entire spin pack. Ferrier does not teach, disclose, or suggest Applicants' claimed invention that improves upon Ferrier by, among other things, removably mounting a steam distribution ring in such a manner that the steam distribution ring may be removed from the spin head without removing the entire spinneret pack body.

As taught by Ferrier, the spin pack is held in place by the holder 50, which is screwed into the block 10. Ferrier, col. 5, lines 44-46. After that, "[t]he final tightening of the pack...is effected by a plurality of grub screws...in the lip of the holder." Ferrier, col. 5, lines 47-49. Thus, Ferrier makes clear that the holder cannot be removed without also removing the pack (spinneret pack body) from the block (spin head), making Ferrier's disclosed assembly difficult to clean.

Applicants' claimed invention overcomes this problem by including, among either things, a steam distribution ring that is removable from the spin head without also requiring the removal the spinneret pack body and which is not taught by Ferrier, nor is it disclosed or suggested. As Ferrier does not teach every element of the claimed invention, Applicants therefore respectfully submit that this rejection should also be withdrawn.

For at least the reasons stated above, claims 1 and 3 as amended are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the amendments be entered and the Application be allowed and passed to issue. In the event any outstanding issues remain, Applicants would appreciate the courtesy of

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a telephone call to Applicants' undersigned representative to resolve such issues in an expeditious manner.

Applicants hereby authorize the Commissioner to deduct the fee of \$110.00 for a one month extension of time for filing this Amendment and Response from the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 04-1928. In the event there is a variance between the amount authorized to be charged and the amount found to be due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to credit or deduct the difference, as appropriate, from the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 04-1928.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: February 25, 2004